Name: _____ Date: _____

Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Circle group

A museum painting that is three hundred years old does not look the way it did when it was finished. Dirt settles on it. The varnish, a clear coat that protects it, slowly turns yellow. The paint can crack or flake. A conservator is an expert in art history and chemistry. The conservator works to make such objects stable and keep them safe.

The work starts with study, not with a brush. The conservator takes photos in plain light and in other kinds of light, such as ultraviolet. This light can show old repairs that the eye cannot see. Tiny samples may go under a microscope to learn what the artist used. Each step goes into a written record.

Before cleaning, the conservator tests a very small spot, often in a corner. This shows how the surface reacts. Then, using a magnifier, the conservator takes off dirt and old varnish a little at a time with careful solvents on small swabs. If paint is missing, the conservator may fill the gap and color it, but only inside the missing part. The artist's own paint is never covered.

A key rule is reversibility. Conservators use materials that can be taken off later without harm. Better ways may be found in the future. The goal is not to make the painting look new. It is to protect what the artist made, so people can enjoy it for many more years.

Questions

1. What does a conservator do?

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_____

2. Why does an old painting look different from when it was finished?

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3. What can ultraviolet light help a conservator see?

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4. Why does the conservator test a very small spot before cleaning?

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5. What does reversibility mean in conservation?

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6. Why is reversibility a smart rule?

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7. Why is the goal not to make the painting look new?

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Words to know

conservator: an expert who cares for and repairs valuable old objects
varnish: a clear coating painted on top to protect a surface
ultraviolet: a kind of light that our eyes cannot see
solvents: liquids that can dissolve dirt or old coatings
reversibility: being able to undo something without causing harm

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Triangle group

A museum painting that is three hundred years old rarely looks the way it did when the artist finished it. Dirt settles on the surface, and the varnish, a clear protective coating, slowly turns yellow. Paint can also crack, lift, or flake. A conservator is a specialist, trained in both art history and chemistry, who works to stabilize such objects and keep them safe for the future.

The work starts with study, not with a brush. The conservator photographs the painting under ordinary light and under other kinds of light, such as ultraviolet, which can reveal old repairs that are invisible to the eye. Tiny samples may be examined under a microscope to learn which materials the artist used. Every observation and every step goes into a written record, so that later experts can see exactly what was done and why.

Before cleaning, the conservator tries one tiny patch, often in a corner, to see how the surface responds. Then, working under magnification, the conservator removes dirt and old varnish a little at a time using carefully chosen solvents applied on small swabs. Where paint has been lost, a conservator may fill the gap and retouch it, but only inside the loss, never over the artist's original work.

A guiding rule is reversibility. Conservators use materials that can be removed later without harming the painting, because better methods may be discovered in the future. The aim is not a like-new finish. It is to protect what the artist actually made, so that people can study and enjoy it for generations.

Questions

1. What does a conservator do?

_____

_____

2. Why does an old painting look different from when it was finished?

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3. What can ultraviolet light help a conservator see?

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_____

4. Why does the conservator test a very small spot before cleaning?

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5. What does reversibility mean in conservation?

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6. Why is reversibility a smart rule?

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7. Why is the goal not to make the painting look brand new?

_____

_____

Words to know

conservator: an expert who cares for and repairs valuable old objects
varnish: a clear coating painted on top to protect a surface
ultraviolet: a kind of light that our eyes cannot see
solvents: liquids that can dissolve dirt or old coatings
reversibility: being able to undo something without causing harm

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Square group

A museum painting that is three hundred years old seldom looks the way it did on the day the artist finished it. Dirt gradually settles on the surface, and the varnish, a clear protective coating, slowly turns yellow with age. The paint itself can also crack, lift, or flake away. A conservator is a specialist, trained in both art history and chemistry, who works to stabilize such objects and preserve them safely for the future.

The work begins with careful study rather than with a brush. The conservator photographs the painting under ordinary light and under other kinds of illumination, such as ultraviolet, which can expose old repairs that are completely invisible to the naked eye. Tiny samples may be examined under a microscope to determine which materials the artist originally used. Every observation and every step is entered into a detailed written record.

Before any cleaning, the conservator tests a very small spot, frequently in a corner, to see how the surface responds. Then, working under magnification, the conservator removes dirt and aged varnish a little at a time, using carefully chosen solvents applied on small swabs. Where paint has been lost, a conservator may fill the gap and retouch it, but only within the area of the loss, never over the artist's original work.

A guiding principle is reversibility. Conservators choose materials that can be removed later without harming the painting, because improved methods may well be discovered in the future. The purpose is not to make the painting look brand new. It is to safeguard what the artist truly created, so that people can study and enjoy it for many generations to come.

Questions

1. What does a conservator do?

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2. Why does an old painting look different from the day it was finished?

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_____

3. What can ultraviolet light help a conservator see?

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4. Why does the conservator test a very small spot before any cleaning?

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5. What does reversibility mean in conservation?

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6. Why is reversibility such a wise principle?

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_____

7. Why is the purpose not to make the painting look brand new?

_____

_____

Words to know

conservator: an expert who cares for and repairs valuable old objects
varnish: a clear coating painted on top to protect a surface
ultraviolet: a kind of light that our eyes cannot see
solvents: liquids that can dissolve dirt or old coatings
reversibility: being able to undo something without causing harm

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Easier · 238 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.4

1. Works to make objects like paintings stable and keep them safe.
2. Dirt settles on it, the varnish turns yellow, and the paint can crack or flake.
3. Old repairs that the eye cannot see.
4. To see how the surface reacts before cleaning more.
5. Using materials that can be taken off later without harm.
6. Better ways may be found in the future, so the painting can be treated again.
7. The aim is to protect what the artist really made.

Triangle: Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

This passage · 261 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10

1. Works to stabilize objects like paintings and keep them safe for the future.
2. Dirt settles on it, the varnish turns yellow, and the paint can crack or flake.
3. Old repairs that are invisible to the eye.
4. To see how the surface responds before cleaning more.
5. Using materials that can be removed later without harming the painting.
6. Better methods may be discovered in the future, and the painting can then be treated again.
7. The aim is to protect what the artist actually made.

Square: Rescuing a Painting Without Making It New

Harder · 276 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 11.2

1. Works to stabilize objects like paintings and preserve them safely for the future.
2. Dirt settles on it, the varnish turns yellow, and the paint can crack, lift, or flake.
3. Old repairs that are invisible to the naked eye.
4. To see how the surface responds before cleaning more.
5. Choosing materials that can be removed later without harming the painting.
6. Improved methods may be discovered in the future, and the painting can then be treated again.
7. The aim is to safeguard what the artist truly created.